

Dot Points provided for Panel 7.2 – Greg Bourke. 15/1/2017.

Panel 7.2 – Support for and supervision of working priests and religious.

1. To what extent have any of the following issues, identified by the Royal Commission through case studies, submissions, private sessions, and a review of the literature regarding child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions, contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse in Catholic Institutions or affected the institutional response to this abuse?
 - a. Ongoing formation of working priests and religious
 - b. Support for and supervision of working priests and religious.

How has ongoing formation and support for and supervision of working priests and religious contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse?

It has contributed when ongoing formation, support for and supervision of priests:

- a. Has not been provided and so inadvertently created a weaker environment for human, intellectual, professionally skilled and spiritual development and therefore deviant behavioural tendencies remained unchallenged and/or unrecognised.
- b. Or when offered was poorly constructed, under resourced and was not systematic.
- c. Or offered as a *soft option*; something that *should be* done and not *must be done* and so ongoing formation, support and supervision were open to non-compliance. (It is presumed that a person with child abuse tendencies will always be non-compliant to a process that confronts and challenges).

It has affected the institutional response when

- a. Bishops, priests and deacons have not received adequate ongoing formation, support and supervision for good governance and maintenance of professional standards.

A description of the genesis and development of ongoing formation, support and supervision in the Australian Catholic Church.

- **Pre 1970's**
- Ongoing formation – ad hoc large clergy gatherings listening to the bishop.
- Support – informal and largely from other clergy, non-systematic but somewhat evident.
- Supervision – informal, non-structured and ad hoc from parish priests.
- **Mid 1970's – mid 1980's**
- Ongoing formation- mainly pastoral formation rather than personal development.
- Support- more problematic as clergy base declined and workloads increased.
- Supervision – emergence of pastoral psychology, group work, clinical pastoral education. But not normative.
- **1981** St Peter's Sabbatical Centre for Priests was established in Canberra.
- 330 priests did the course which was about one third of the clergy base in Australia.
- **1985** Fr. Vince Dwyer (USA) established a sophisticated approach that trained clergy to give support on a one to one basis. It incorporated psychological testing. It was set up in 16 dioceses in Australia.
- **1986** Ministry to Priests now known as Clergy Life and Ministry with a director in each diocese began.
- **1989.** St. Peters Sabbatical Centre closed.

- 1992** – Ongoing Formation established as normative and imperative according to *I will Give you Shepherds* – a papal document (Pastores Dabo Vobis).
- It articulated Human Development as the key for all aspects of development.
- **1994** – Ongoing formation to be systematic with precise forms related to age and years of ordination according to *Directory on the Ministry of Priests* – a papal document.
- **1997** – *Appraisal of Ministry* document first produced by ACBC. Offered on an invitation basis. Ad hoc uptake generally well appreciated and used when completed.
- **1998 – 2001**. Seminaries in Melbourne and Sydney increased philosophy units and reduced pastoral placement and review opportunities.
- **2000** – MSC Order made *Appraisal of Ministry* mandatory and is now normative.
- **2001** – An increased level of International Priests assuming positions in ministry in Australia. New array of developmental and support needs and issues combined with a weak systematic induction and support programme.
- **2007** – Programme for Priestly Formation in Australia produced by ACBC- main emphasis on seminary training and less on ongoing formation for clergy.
- **2016** – *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, a Vatican document combines strongly, as normative, Initial Formation with Ongoing Formation in same chapter. Speaks of the *right of the people* to have suitable and mature priests.

Comment: General improvement regarding the opportunities for ongoing formation, support and supervision. This may or may not be related to a decline in the levels of child abuse offenses since the 1970's but is somewhat encouraging. However the drawback is that ongoing formation, the participation in support structures and supervision of ministry is not mandatory. Participation is good amongst the high functioning 'healthy' clergy but the person who may have deviant child attraction tendencies is able to avoid (which is part of the pathology) these developmental opportunities.

What we can build on:

The functioning and established National Office for Clergy Life and Ministry. CLM has directors in each diocese and is supervised by the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry. The BCCM has an advisory council. The new independent Catholic Professional Standards Ltd is to be a monitor body.

We can do more by:

By requiring ongoing formation to be mandatory with a minimum amount of hours per year.

By making supervision mandatory and by providing variant choices for supervision for example - peer -group supervision, online distance supervision, private supervision, supervisor-lead groups, age and status specific groups, groups that are gender and non-clerical balanced, ESL groups.

By making the ACBC Appraisal of Ministry process mandatory at the conclusion of appointments.

By providing access to a mentor or a skills coach and providing access to a therapist, a counsellor and/or a psychologist.

By applying the above mandates to the three rites of ordination: bishop, priest and deacon.

By ensuring that mandatory requirements are monitored by Catholic Professional Standards Ltd.

By promoting and make accessible the Professional Issues in Pastoral Ministry course and the like.

By reviewing and improving induction programs for International Priests.

